

Town Meeting



BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

Broadcast by Stations of the American Broadcasting Co.



Pat. Off.

Are Teachers Free To Teach?

Guest Moderator, **ORVILLE HITCHCOCK**

Speakers

RONZO F. MYERS

CHARLES J. KERSTEN

(See also page 12)

COMING

August 8, 1950

Do We Need More Wartime Controls Now?

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The account of the meeting reported in this Bulletin was transcribed from recordings made of the actual broadcast and represents the exact content of the meeting as nearly as such mechanism permits. The publishers and printer are not responsible for the statements of the speakers or the points of view presented.



THE BROADCAST OF AUGUST 1: "Are Teachers Free To Teach?"

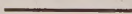
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THE BROADCAST OF AUGUST 8: "Do We Need More Wartime Controls Now?"



The Broadcast of August 1, 1950, originated in Convention Hall, Enid, Oklahoma, from 9:00 to 9:30 p.m., EDT, in coöperation with the Enid Citizen's Forum and Phillips University, over the American Broadcasting Company Network.



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BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

GEORGE V. DENNY, JR., MODERATOR



AUGUST 1, 1950

VOL. 16, No. 14

Are Teachers Free To Teach?

Announcer:

From Convention Hall in Enid, Oklahoma, the American Broadcasting Company brings you the Nation's favorite radio forum. We are in Enid as guests of Phillips University, the Forum Committee of Chamber of Commerce, and a host committee composed of Enid's most active organizations: the Altrusa Club, the American Business Club, American Legion and its Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Also represented are the service clubs in Enid—Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, Optimist, and Exchange Clubs—and our ABC station, KCRC.

Young as American cities go, Enid has in the comparatively brief span of 57 years grown from the former home of Indian tribes to Oklahoma's fourth largest city. It is the wheat capital of the world and the home of the largest independent oil refinery in our Nation.

Now to preside over our discussion in the absence of George V. Denny, Jr., here is our guest moderator, Dr. Orville Hitchcock, Professor of Speech at Iowa State University. Dr. Hitchcock. (Applause)

Moderator Hitchcock:

Good evening, friends. I am very happy to substitute as moderator once again for my friend George Denny, who is on his summer vacation. Our broadcast this week comes to you from Enid, Oklahoma, where we are the guests of Phillips University, the Forum Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, and representatives of local organizations.

It is quite appropriate that one of our hosts should be a university because tonight we will deal with a vital educational question: "Are Teachers Free To Teach?"

Last Tuesday on Town Meeting, we discussed the topic: "Is Freedom of Speech Threatened in America?" This is a broad subject with many sides. This evening we take up one of the most important of these facets, one that concerns all of us—the freedom of students to learn and of teachers to teach.

Underlying tonight's discussion is the problem of the influence of Communists and other subversives who may be teaching in our schools and colleges. We are faced with the basic question: Should these people be permitted to teach?

Then we have the further question: How can we insure that opponents of our democratic system will not do harm to our children and to our country? And, at the same time, how can we preserve the traditional freedom of our teachers to teach the truth as they see it?

Some people say that loyalty oaths or other legislative action are part of the answer. Others argue strenuously that measures of this kind do not solve the problem, and are the first step toward educational thought control.

To discuss these issues we have here on the platform at Enid's Convention Hall two outstanding speakers — Dr. Alonzo F. Myers, chairman of the Department of Higher Education at New York University, and former Representative Charles J. Kersten of Wisconsin. First we shall hear from Dr. Myers, who is author of *Education in a Democracy*, and formerly chairman of the National Education Association's Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education. Dr. Myers. (*Applause*)

Dr. Myers:

A bank president in a mid-western town asked me: "Just how much communism is there among members of the teaching profession?"

I replied that I think communism is just about as common among teachers as embezzlement is among bankers.

He thought about that for a bit, then said: "I suppose you're right." He knew nearly all the teachers in his community, and he assured me that they could not be considered Reds. But he was being propagandized to the effect that there is a great communist menace in the schools.

We then discussed embezzlement among bankers, how rare

It is, how unfair it would be to the banking profession, and how destructive of public confidence it would be if there were to be a persistent propaganda campaign designed to convince the public that bankers are embezzlers.

Something exceedingly bad has been permitted to happen in many school and college classrooms. It is that there are just too many things we don't dare talk about, and too many questions that it is inappropriate for our students to ask. Teachers are being intimidated by pressure groups, by state legislative un-American activities committees, by special loyalty oath requirements, such as the Board of Regents of the University of California demanded of the faculty of that institution, and by such legislation as the Feinberg Law in New York State.

The reaction of too many teachers is that they will carefully avoid all lively and controversial subjects in their teaching. Certainly no Communist would hesitate to take a loyalty oath.

There is a parallel tendency to remove from school libraries all printed material of a controversial nature. We used to ridicule "thought control" in Japan, remember? Well, we are up to our ears in thought control here in America right now.

This negative attitude indicates a shocking lack of faith in the efficacy and strength of democratic processes. It suggests a fear that if American youth were given all the facts and the right of free choice, they might choose communist totalitarianism in preference to our great democratic liberties and traditions.

Our forefathers were not afraid when they adopted the Bill of Rights, even though there were many disloyal people in America at that time. They did not say, "We will wait until all these people become loyal Americans before we adopt the Bill of Rights." Instead, they adopted a bold set of principles for free men that challenged the loyalties of all men.

We need a similar approach today. Democracy will be defended successfully, not through intimidation and repression, but through full discussion and enlightenment.

Totalitarianism cannot stand free and open comparison with democratic principles and practices. That is why Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin found it necessary to burn the books, and to stifle academic freedom and freedom of speech. That is why they found it necessary to conduct ruthless purges of the teaching profession. The strength of democracy is that it can withstand comparison. We will emulate totalitarian

practices only at great peril to the very democratic traditions that we are trying to protect.

There is a strong and growing tendency to indict and to dismiss teachers on the allegation that they are members of subversive groups or that they associate with persons who are members of subversive groups. We should insist that no person is to be fired for what he thinks or is alleged to think. If he is to be dismissed, it should be for what he does or fails to do.

Admittedly, it is more difficult to prove overt acts than it is to accumulate evidence in support of dangerous thoughts. But the threats to civil liberties and to academic freedom in the policy of indictment by association are so great that we must take a strong stand at that point.

I would not knowingly employ a Communist as a teacher but neither would I fire a teacher because he was or was alleged to be a Communist. If he was a Communist and behaved the way Communists are supposed to behave, I would fire him for such behavior.

Any possible damage that a communist teacher could do is small indeed as compared to the damage that already has been done by the witch-hunters who have succeeded in scaring and demoralizing teachers and school administrators to such an extent that unless we get over this hysteria perhaps it will be true that one communist teacher might be more effective than a hundred scared rabbits masquerading as teachers. (*Applause*)

Moderator Hitchcock:

Thank you, Dr. Myers. Now here to present another point of view is Mr. Charles J. Kersten, formerly chairman of the Congressional Subcommittees that investigated communism in labor unions, and currently a Republican candidate for the Fifth Congressional District of Wisconsin in opposition to Representative Andrew Biemiller. Mr. Kersten. (*Applause*)

Mr. Kersten:

If I found out that the bank president Dr. Myers referred to belonged to a secret society for the advancement of embezzlement, and I had my \$98 bank account in his bank, I wouldn't wait until it was embezzled before I tried to draw it out. (*Laughter and applause*)

Now teaching is a noble profession. Entrusted to the teacher's care is a large part of the shaping of the hearts and minds

of the young. The communist apparatus is mindful of the importance of reaching into this very strategic area.

Listen to the party instructions given to its members who are teachers. I quote from the party's theory organ called *The Communist*: "Only when teachers have really mastered Marxism-Leninism," says this party organ, "will they be able skillfully to inject its principles into their teaching at the least risk of exposure and at the same time conduct struggles around the schools in a truly Bolshevik manner."

There you have it, ladies and gentlemen of the Town Hall and of the radio audience.

Dr. Myers would let a true and tried member of this international criminal conspiracy—dedicated to the destruction of everything our Judeo-Christian civilization holds dear—go on shaping the minds and souls of the young until he was caught red-handed in an open revolutionary tactic.

At what point would Dr. Myers have stopped the Reds in the schools of Czechoslovakia or any other of the countries taken over by Soviet Russia?

Would he permit the personable Alger Hiss to teach economics, or a Dr. Fuchs to teach nuclear physics at one of our universities after he found out they were members of the Communist party?

President Sproul of the University of California recently stated: "Under the guise of academic freedom the Communists have persistently sought to carry out a program in American colleges of indoctrination and propaganda against the spiritual as well as material values of democracy."

Professor Lovejoy referred to communist activities in the schools as "an international political movement which has already destroyed the freedom of universities wherever it has obtained its objectives."

On July 8—less than a month ago—at the annual convention of the National Educational Association, the largest organization of teachers in America, there was adopted almost unanimously an amendment to its by-laws refusing admittance to its organization to members of the Communist party. (Applause)

Last November, the C. I. O. began the formal expulsion from its organization of certain labor unions precisely on the grounds of communism. Can it be said that the N. E. A. or the C. I. O. are against civil liberties or that they advocate thought control? It is precisely because Communists practice

thought control that we don't want them in our schools
(Applause)

In our labor unions, or in any other important segments of our society, the teacher who deliberately enters into this international criminal conspiracy abandons his main qualifications as a teacher: an honest effort to teach the truth.

I do not agree with the words of Dr. Myers that "any possible damage that a communist teacher could do is small. That's what Dr. Myers just told us.

The perversion of the truth to the Marxism-Leninism line is this very hour shocking the world. (Applause)

Moderator Hitchcock:

Thank you, Mr. Kersten. Before we take questions from the audience would you gentlemen like to join me around the microphone for some additional comments? Dr. Myers did Mr. Kersten convince you that he's right, yet?

Dr. Myers: Well, not quite. As a matter of fact, this is an exceedingly complex problem. Now Mr. Kersten referred for example, to the action of the N. E. A. saying that they didn't want Communists in the N. E. A., but he didn't say how they are going to find out who is one. That's the question I want to ask Mr. Kersten.

He isn't going to wait for a person to disclose his unfitness to teach through his efforts to propagandize his students. He's just going to throw him out right away.

But the question then is, if you would not wait, Mr. Kersten for teachers to disclose their unfitness to be teachers before dismissing them, on what basis would you proceed? Would you have them all investigated by the FBI? Would you dismiss those against whom some one circulated a rumor? Or would you have us all take a super-loyalty oath, and conclude that those who are willing to take it were loyal and the other disloyal?

It seems to me you are being pretty naive in suggesting that by such a means as that you can find out who's loyal and who is not. The only way you can find that out is through their actions.

I didn't indicate that I'd wait for them to commit some terrible overt act. I said that whenever a teacher disclosed his unfitness through, for example, propagandizing for communism or any other ism, I'd fire him for that. (Applause)

Dr. Hitchcock: All right, thank you, Dr. Myers. Now, Mr.

Kersten, would you like to answer that and then would you ask a question of Dr. Myers?

Mr. Kersten: Well, Dr. Myers, I don't know that the naivete is confined all to one side here. You have stated that you would not fire a teacher merely because he was a Communist. On that, I fundamentally disagree with you, and also the N. E. A. disagrees with you. They would not accept a Communist in their organization, regardless of whether or not he commits an overt act. I think a large part of the overt act is involved in being a Communist, being a member of this criminal conspiracy.

There are many suggestions as to how this problem can be handled. Loyalty oaths are provided in some states; different methods and procedures in others. Some may be better and some may be not so good.

However, if a labor union official takes a loyalty oath or signs an affidavit that he's not a Communist, why shouldn't a teacher? These are both strategic areas.

Perhaps a more simple approach would be something like the law that was proposed in the 80th Congress, the Mundt-Nixon Bill, that requires all Communists to register. It doesn't require everybody; it requires members of the communist conspiracy to register. We know that the FBI has a great deal of information on who the Communists are. If they fail to register, then these Communists can be picked out. Everybody doesn't have to be involved. (Applause)

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Mr. Kersten. Now will you ask a brief question of Dr. Myers so that we can move on?

Mr. Kersten: I would like to ask Dr. Myers this question in view of the fact that he said he wouldn't fire a Communist merely because he was a Communist. If you would keep a known member, Dr. Myers, of the communist apparatus on the school faculty until an overt act by him was called to your attention, would you keep a known Communist in an atomic research laboratory, or in the State Department, or, let us say, in an American Intelligence Unit behind our lines in Korea until he committed an overt act?

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you. Very briefly, Dr. Myers.

Dr. Myers: I'll give as brief and good an answer as I can to that. I think the answer to the problem we're dealing with here is much more careful selection of teachers than we have exercised. I've known many school administrators to hire teachers without ever having seen them. I've known them to hire them without any careful investigation of their reputa-

tion and character. It's the same answer as to how we protect the teaching profession against such infiltration, as to how we protect our atomic energy plants and other crucial areas against it. It is by exceedingly careful investigation and selection prior to the selection. (*Applause*)

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Dr. Myers and Mr. Kerster. Now while we get ready for our question period here is a message for our Town Hall listeners.

Announcer: To make this truly America's Town Meeting, we are on a nation-wide tour enabling listeners in all parts of the country to see Town Meeting in action. Here is our itinerary for the next several weeks. We suggest that you make a note of the broadcast in your vicinity. Next Tuesday Town Meeting originates from Duluth, Minnesota. On August 15, we'll be in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and on August 22, in Milwaukee. On August 29, we will be the guests of the North Shore Forum at Glencoe, Illinois. On September 5, your Town Meeting visits Port Huron, Michigan, and on September 12, we originate from Yankton, South Dakota.

If you live in or near any of these cities, we look forward to seeing you. Your ABC stations can tell you where to obtain tickets for these broadcasts, or write to the Town Hall, New York 18, New York.

Now for questions from our Enid audience, we return you to our guest moderator, Dr. Orville Hitchcock.

QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

Dr. Hitchcock: Now, Dr. Myers and Mr. Kersten, if you're ready for questions we'll take one from the gentleman in the middle aisle. Yes, sir, will you go ahead?

Man: This question is directed to Dr. Myers. Dr. Myers, what side of this question are the admitted Communists really on, and how do we keep from playing into their hands?

Dr. Myers: I don't know what the Communists would like to do about this, but I can tell you what I suspect. I'm not at their confidence. I think it would please the Communists immeasurably if we would continue to break down confidence in the teaching profession, and to cause the public to think the teachers are Reds, and, having decided that, to refuse to grant adequate support for the schools. I think that is the thing that would please them more than anything else.

(Applause)

Dr. Hitchcock: Mr. Kersten wants to say a word on that question.

Mr. Kersten: I think that question was very good because of the case of the Feinberg Law, which is a communist controlled law so far as teachers are concerned for the state of New York, the Communists are definitely on the side to knock out that law. In New York, they have two appeals pending, and the two courts in that state that are acting on the case have held the law to be constitutional thus far.

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Mr. Kersten. Now let's take a question from the left aisle.

Man: This question is addressed to Mr. Kersten.

Dr. Hitchcock: Mr. Kersten, come back.

Man: I'm Roy Daniel, principal of Emerson Junior High School here in Enid. Do you agree that the life adjustment program which gives pupils the training in making decisions for themselves will help to guard against communism in our schools?

Mr. Kersten: Well, certainly I think that where students can be made to think for themselves, it is highly advisable. However, where there are dangers involved so far as the communist conspiracy, a classroom of youth in the hands of a clever communist professor, I think, is at a great disadvantage.

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Mr. Kersten. Now could we have a question from the lady in the center aisle?

Lady: My question is addressed to Dr. Alonzo Myers. Why

should we let communist teachers, even if they are smoochy enough to get by the law, make Judith Coplons of our children? (Applause)

Dr. Myers: I think I can only respond, in the brief time I have, by asking the question: How do you know who is Communist if he does not through his teaching—in the case of a teacher—disclose that he is propagandizing? If he is propagandizing, how do you know he is a Communist—because the neighbor said so?

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Dr. Myers. We won't have a chance for the lady to answer that, but we'll take another question from the left.

Man: Mr. Kersten, please. Mr. Kersten, don't you think our form of government will beat communism in free and open discussion in the classroom and on Town Hall?

Mr. Kersten: In response to that question, I think, as I said before, when a class of students is in the hands of a clever communist dialectic professor—a man really clever in the

THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

ORVILLE HITCHCOCK—Dr. Hitchcock was formerly associated with Town Hall as administrative assistant to George V. Denny, Jr., Moderator of Town Meeting of the Air. Mr. Hitchcock is now professor of speech at State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

ALONZO F. MYERS—Dr. Myers has been a professor of education at New York University since 1930, and chairman of the Department of Higher Education there since 1941. He is also former chairman of the National Education Association's Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education.

Dr. Myers was graduated from Tri-State College, Indiana, and received A.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Columbia University. During World War I, he was a captain in the infantry of the U. S. Army. Dr. Myers' publications include *Education in a Democracy* (with C. O. Williams) and *Problems in Public School Supervision* (with Louise Kifer). He is editor of *Problems in Teacher Training* (Vols. VIII, IX, X).

CHARLES J. KERSTEN—Attorney Charles J. Kersten is a former Republican Congressman from Wisconsin. Born in Chicago in 1902, he has a law degree from Marquette University College of Law. Since 1928, he has engaged in the practice of law in Milwaukee where he is a member of the firm of Kersten and McKinnon. From 1937 until 1943, he was first assistant district attorney of Milwaukee County. He was a member of the 80th Congress from the Fifth Wisconsin District. While in Congress, he was chairman of the House subcommittee investigating communism in labor in the United States.

dispensing of communist propaganda—the students are at a disadvantage. If communism is to be taught to the students, it should be taught by someone who knows and understands it and whose purpose is to tell the truth. The purpose of the communist professor is to tell a lie. (Applause)

Dr. Hitchcock: Dr. Myers has a statement to make on this question.

Dr. Myers: I want to comment briefly, too, on that question. I think the young man is right in his implications. Mr. Kersten seems to be suggesting that students are dopes and are not able to spot propaganda when they hear it. He doesn't even suggest what the 100, or rather 1,000, honest teachers—teaching alongside that possibly one Communist teacher—are doing. He underrates us terribly to think that that one communist would be able to subvert all our youth. I wonder what he thinks the rest of us honest teachers are doing while that one Communist is getting away with it.

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Dr. Myers. Now could we have a question from the center back here? Yes, sir.

Man: This question is directed to Dr. Myers. Dr. Myers, do you think that upholding the reputation of the teaching profession is more valuable than finding out where our Communists are?

Dr. Myers: No. I'm not interested, as such, in upholding the reputation of the teaching profession. I'm interested in keeping teachers free to teach the truth without intimidation. (Applause)

I'm saying to you that these purges and these loyalty oaths are intimidating teachers to the point at which most of that which ought to be valuable in education is being ruled out.

Dr. Hitchcock: We have ten seconds for Mr. Kersten to comment.

Mr. Kersten: Well, in comment on that, I would say that teachers would be upholding the teaching profession if they could throw the Communists out. (Applause) The Communists drag the teaching profession down as the Communists would drag any other organization down into which they had infiltrated. (Applause)

Dr. Hitchcock: Thank you, Dr. Myers and Mr. Kersten. Now in just a few moments I'll tell you about our subject and speakers for next week. (Applause)

Announcer: Tonight, Town Meeting has brought to your attention the two sides of the discussion, "Are Teachers Free to Teach?" As citizens vitally interested in preserving free-

dom in America, you have joined democracy in action. You have given yourselves an opportunity to consider both views. This is the test of democracy.

Perhaps you have friends whose interest in tonight's subject has been voiced on several occasions. If they have been unable to hear tonight's program, why not suggest they send



—Press Association

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What should be required of the teachers in the schools of our
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Address all requests to Town Hall, New York 18, New York. If you would like to receive the Town Meeting Bulletin each week, send \$4.50 for one year, or \$1 for an eleven-week subscription.

Now for news of next week's program here again is our guest moderator, Dr. Orville Hitchcock.

Dr. Hitchcock: Before announcing next week's panel, I wish to express the appreciation of Town Hall to our Enid host

Mr. Eugene Briggs, president of Phillips University; Mr. E. B. Smith, chairman of the Forum Committee of the Chamber of Commerce; and the officers and members of the many local organizations which form the host committee. Our appreciation also to members of the staff of Station KCRC, and our sponsor every Tuesday night, the Oklahoma Benefit Life Insurance Company. Thanks also to this splendid audience in Mid's Convention Hall.



Town Meeting Bulletin

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12. How Can We Strengthen Our World Position?
13. Is Freedom of Speech Threatened in America?

Remember, for a copy of tonight's program, send 10 cents in coin to Town Hall, New York 18, New York.

Next week your Town Meeting will be in Duluth, Minnesota, where our host will be Freimuth's Department Store, our sponsor on Station WDSM. Our timely subject will be, "Do We Need More Wartime Controls Now?" We will have as speakers, Minnesota's Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, and *Newsweek's* business columnist, Henry Hazlitt, who is also editor of the new magazine *The Freeman*. ABC's popular commentator, Paul Harvey, will be our guest moderator. Duluth listeners may secure tickets at Freimuth's Department Store.

So plan to be with us next week and every week at the sound of the Crier's bell. (Applause)